

ENGLISH DRAMA DISCOURSE OF THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY : A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The article deals with the philosophical paradigm which underlay the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century. Social and cultural conditions that predetermined the origin and functioning of the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century are described; two strategies of the English drama discourse of the period have been analyzed (the strategy of naming and the strategy of identification) and illustrated with the examples elicited from the plays by W. Wycherley, G. Etherege, and J. Dryden; verbal means of their realization have been singled out.

Key words: drama, play, philosophy, libertinism, discourse, discourse strategy.

Маріна О. В. Англійський драматичний дискурс кінця сімнадцятого століття: філософський погляд. У статті розглянуто філософську парадигму, що слугувала підґрунтям англійського драматичного дискурсу кінця сімнадцятого століття. Метою статті є простежити особливості мовної реалізації філософії лібертинізму в англійському драматичному дискурсі кінця сімнадцятого століття. Оскільки філософія лібертинізму пропагує релігійну, моральну і сексуальну свободу, звернення до проблеми мовної реалізації філософії лібертинізму в епоху демократизації суспільства і переоцінки цінностей вважаємо актуальним. Завдання статті: схарактеризувати соціально-культурні умови виникнення і функціонування англійського драматичного дискурсу кінця сімнадцятого століття; надати визначення філософії лібертинізму, що лежить в основі цього дискурсу; надати визначення поняттям «дискурс» і «дискурсивна стратегія»; виокремити і схарактеризувати дискурсивні стратегії, що домінували в англійському драматичному дискурсі кінця сімнадцятого століття, а саме – стратегія ідентифікації та стратегія присвоювання імен; виділити та проаналізувати мовні засоби їх реалізації в драматичних творах означеного періоду. Приклади дискурсивних стратегій вилучено із п'єс Вільяма Вичерлі («Дружина з передмістя»), Джона Драйдена («Усе заради любові; або втрачений світ») і Джорджа Етеріджа («Модний чоловік; або сер Фоплінг Флаттер»). Результати наукової розвідки свідчать про численні випадки прояву філософії лібертинізму в мові персонажів драматичних творів означеного періоду, які реалізуються через означені дискурсивні стратегії, що вербалізуються, у свою чергу, за допомогою таких мовних засобів, як метафора, уособлення і гіпербола та, відповідно, антономазії. Перспективи дослідження вбачаємо у виокремленні та аналізі інших стратегій англійського драматичного дискурсу кінця сімнадцятого століття.

Ключові слова: драма, п'єса, філософія, лібертинізм, дискурс, дискурсивна стратегія.

Introduction

The late seventeenth century in England saw there turn of Charles II asking (1660–85) following the period of Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth (Encyclopedia Britannica). The period is commonly known as the Restoration of the monarchy in England (ibid.). Changes that the reinstatement of the monarchy brought to the country are hard to overestimate. It established a new court and new social forms. It couldn't however restore the 'ideologies' and social structures of the pre-revolutionary period. Restoration culture is a compromise, often uneasy, sometimes poised, an anxious and contradictory endeavor to create traditions and

celebrate newness and we expect plays to ‘register’ the tone of their period (Burns, 1987: 1). Therefore, in the article it’s argued that through the analysis of the late seventeenth century plays we can make conclusions as to the specificities of verbalization of the philosophy of libertinism in the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century and single out specificities of the discourse under consideration correspondingly.

The philosophy of libertinism originated and thrived in the period of Restoration but resonated in literature through the centuries afterwards (Hileman, 1994). As the philosophy of libertinism propagates religious, moral and sexual freedom, nihilism of conventional values, excessive appreciation of hedonism we see the topicality of the research in addressing the issue of discursive realization of the philosophy under consideration in the times of democratization of societies and reassessment of values.

The researches of different types of discourses, the boundaries between discourse analysis and social sciences, linguistic aspects of a person’s speech, mechanisms of cognition have been a subject of interest for such prominent scholars as Arutyunova (1991), van Dijk (1983), Foucault (1972), Karasik (2009), Langacker (2017) and others, however, the question of influence of different philosophical trends on discourse formation and functioning still represents an area for scientific research.

Thus, the aim of the article is to trace specificities of discursive realization of the philosophy of libertinism in the English drama of the end of the seventeenth century. The objectives of the article are as follows: to render the social and political context in which the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century originated and functioned; to characterize libertinism, the main philosophical paradigm that underlay this discourse; to define the notions ‘discourse’ and ‘discursive strategy’, to single out strategies of the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century and trace their verbalization in the plays of the period.

Methodology of Research

In the article we pursue methods of discourse analysis to study strategies of the English discourse of the late seventeenth century, method of cognitive-discursive interpretation to interpret communicative intentions / interactions of the speakers, method of definitions to define the main categories of the research and method of semantic analysis to analyze the meanings of the lexemes that verbalize the strategy of naming.

Results and Discussions

Standard definitions of both virtue and libertinism are rooted in their Restoration discourses (Potter, 1999: 76). Tiffany Potter defines this type of discourse as ‘socio-philosophical discourse of libertinism’ (Potter, 1999: 169), hence our concern about the underlying philosophy. *Libertinism (or libertinage)* is generally understood as disregard of authority and convention in sexual or religious matters (dictionary.com) and a libertine – as someone who leads an immoral life and always looks for pleasure (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). It’s argued, that the philosophy of libertinism is best revealed in the drama of the period as in

the seventeenth century theatre-going was an integral part of life first for the nobility, and later for the bourgeois audiences as well, thus, drama represents a specific discursive practice of the period under consideration. The nobles who frequented the play-house were the libertines whose characters and way of life were satirically shown on stage.

A Restoration comedy, the genre that was particularly popular at the end of the seventeenth century, represents a synthesis of romance and urban themes. It rejects the ideal for a realism of the social moment and finds a dynamic not in the reimposition of order but in the witty opportunism of intrigue (Burns, 1987: 1). Although libertinism was quite popular, it was not the only philosophical movement of the late seventeenth century. Robert C. Neagle writes that at the very beginning of the Restoration period the city remained Puritan, horrified at the manners of the day and the audacity of the plays, the citizens did not attend the performances at all, or very rarely (Neagle, 1989). However, libertinism that was widely shown on stage was ‘thriving’, which is proved by the famous phrase commonly known to theatre critics and dramatists – «the character of the drama became conformed to the character of its patrons» (that is the nobility (specification – mine) (ibid.). Representatives of the Court mixed with ‘the Town’ and the ‘middle class’. Intellectuals anxious to keep abreast of literary trends attended. Fops and gallants and vizards came to mix in the pit as much as, if not more than, to see the play (ibid). Hence extensive mentioning of the lexemes that denote things connected with the theatre in the characters’ speeches (here and after marked in bold by me):

*Therefore his **Play** shan’t ask your leave to live:*

Well, let the vain rash Fop, by buffing so,

Think to obtain the better terms of you;

*But we the **Actors** humbly will submit,*

*Now, and at any time, to a full **Pit**;*

Nay, often we anticipate your rage,

*And murder **Poets** for you, on our **Stage**:*

*We set no **Guards** upon our **Tyring-Room***

*But when with flying **Colours**, there you come,*

We patiently you see, give up to you,

*Our **Poets**, **Virgins**, nay our **Matrons** too (Wycherley, 1953:60).*

In order to single out the strategies that dominated in the discourse of the time it is important to know more about the conditions in which this discourse originated and was functioning. Frequenters of the pit had little concern for the actors or those who paid to see and hear a performance. They fought, dueled, groomed their hair, picked their teeth, stood on the stage and on benches in the pit, snatched wigs off each others’ heads, ogled and loved the ladies (Neagle, 1989).

The pit influenced the drama of the day by providing plenty of examples of foolish and faddish behavior. Still the point worth making is that within the intimate confines of the small theaters the crowd was very active, so much so that the dynamics between the actor and audience was an influential variable in the production of Restoration comedy (ibid.). This point is expressed by metaphor and hyperbole in the examples below:

Harcourt: But why shouldst thou be afraid of being in a play, who expose yourself every day in the playhouses... (Wycherley, 1953: 95).

Also in:

"Tis good breeding now to be civil to none but players and Exchange women" (Etherege 1953: 187).

Before proceeding to the analysis of the English drama discourse of the period it is necessary to give definitions to the main categories of the research. In the article we agree with the definition of discourse offered by Foucault (1972), who defines it as «a complex, differentiated practice, governed by analyzable rules and transformations» (Foucault, 1972: 209); «a combination of anonymous historical rules always determined by time and space, which predetermine conditions of utterance effect for a particular epoch and linguistic environment» (quoted after Chernyavskaya, 2009: 137). A *discourse strategy* is in its widest sense «all the resources that the speaker of a language consciously uses in order to build and interpret the discourses within the appropriate context, and in order to interact efficiently within communication» (Romano & Dolores, 2016: 1-2).

With that in mind I argue that *strategies of identification* and *naming* were among the dominant strategies of the English drama discourse of the late seventeenth century.

Strategy of identification (Morozova, 2015) within the context of research identifies the characters with adherents of the philosophy of libertinism. In the drama of the end of the seventeenth century this strategy is of a particular interest as the change of the political regime in England resulted into new discursive practices and altered the way people viewed themselves.

Strategy of identification is often revealed implicitly through mentioning practices and ideas characteristic of libertines rather than mentioning the lexeme itself:

Medley: I advise you like a friend, reform your life; you have brought the envy of the world upon you by living above yourself. Whoring and swearing are vices too genteel for a shoemaker (Etherege, 1953 : 165).

In the example above Medley, a character of the play «The Man of Mode ; or, Sir Fopling Flutter» by George Etherege, identifies himself with libertines who use bad language, change mistresses, deny conventional behavior (in our case – a noble well-bred person behaves like an uneducated and ill-mannered one taking it as a new norm) and lead a dissipated way of life. The above mentioned activities are listed as characteristic of the upper crust. The strategy is realized through emotive vocabulary and oxymoron.

Dorilant: Don't you give money to painters to draw you like? And are you afraid of your pictures at length in a playhouse, where all your mistresses may see you? (Wycherley, 1953 : 95).

The example from the play vividly demonstrates practice of libertinism in the characters' love affairs.

Shoemaker: 'Zbud, I think you men of quality will grow a sun reasonable as the women; you would engross the sins of the nation; poor folks can no sooner be wicked, but they're railed at by their betters (Etherege, 1953 : 165-166).

In the example above we see how through the strategy of identification

a shoe-maker identifies himself with poor ordinary people, at the same time identifying the nobility («*men of quality*») with sinners whose behavior is unreasonable. Moreover, the shoemaker sees the nobility as an integral part of the English nation («*you would engross the sins of the nation*»). The metaphor «*poor folks can never be wicked*» reveals that vices propagated by the philosophy of libertinism became the 'lot' of the nobility. The strategy of identification in the example above is realized through metaphors and personification.

Rejection of family values and adherence to the philosophy of libertinism is manifested in the fact that in the plays not only the nobility, but also servants and ordinary people strive to follow the trend:

Dorimant (to the shoe-maker – (the parenthesis - mine):Go, get you home, and govern your family better; do not let your wife follow you to the alehouse, beat your whore, and lead you home in triumph (Etherege, 1953 : 166).

Dorimant, a character of William Wycherley's play «The Country Wife» thinks that every man has a lover and it seems quite natural to him. The strategy is realized through the use of a euphemism.

As mentioned above, the philosophy of libertinism rejects traditional family values which is metaphorically illustrated in the following example:

Lady Fidget: The woman is hated for by 'em as much for loving her husband... Country Wife, (Wycherley, 1953 : 63).

In the dramatic works of the period we see that characters often identify themselves with players, play-houses, and acting which became an integral part of leisure for the nobility. Theatrical vocabulary is often used in metaphorical expressions. Dorimar, a character of the play «The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter» by George Etherege compares a woman to a play and uses colloquial vocabulary:

Dorimar: 'Tis not likely a man should be fond of seeing a damned old play when there is a new one acted (Etherege, 1953 : 218).

Even in the genre of tragedy in John Dryden's «All for Love; or, the World Well Lost» the philosophy of libertinism is echoed in Cleopatra's affairs, conveyed through metaphors:

*ANTONY. When I beheld you first, it was in Egypt,
Ere Caesar saw your eyes, you gave me love,
And were too young to know it; that I settled
Your father in his throne, was for your sake;
I left the acknowledgment for time to ripen.
Caesar stept in, and, with a greedy hand,
Plucked the green fruit, ere the first blush of red,
Yet cleaving to the bough. He was my lord,
And was, beside, too great for me to rival;
But, I deserved you first, though he enjoyed you...* (Dryden, 1953 : 279).

However, in my view, the best example of the strategy of identification is given in epilogue of the play «The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter» by George Etherege and expressed with allusion («*Legion's his name*»), synecdoche («*a people*

in a man»), metaphors «*From each he meets he culls whate'er he can*», «*Sir Fopling him, or him, can call*», «*knight o' th' shire*» and hyperbole «*represents ye all*». The metaphor «*knight o' th' shire*» shows the noble origin of the people like Fopling. At the same time the author states that at the time there are many people you can call 'Fopling' (the nobles who are fond of fancy dresses, clothes and love affairs). Their number is so huge that the author produces an allusion to the Bible in the last line:

Yet none Sir Fopling him, or him, can call;

He's knight o' th' shire, and represents ye all.

From each he meets he culls whate'er he can,

Legion's his name, a people in a man (Etherege, 1953 : 243).

Another strategy – *the discourse strategy of naming* – that conveys ideological dimensions of names (Chiluwa, 2010) – helps to vividly describe the spirit and the philosophy underlying the drama discourse of the time. According to Derik (2015), proper names play an important role in a literary work. The scholar states that such names contain in their inner stem explicit, disguised or allusive characteristics of the person who is the bearer of the given name. The scholar calls such names 'speaking names', 'character onyms' and even refers them to the stylistic device of antonomasia (Derkik, 2015 : 180-181). Sachkova (2012), however, states that antonomasia is intended to point out the leading, most characteristic feature of a person or event, at the same time pinning this trait as a proper name to the person or event in question (Sachkova, 2012 : 36). In the article I choose to agree with Sachkova and cautiously refer to the analyzed units as cases of antonomasia.

The characters' names in the English drama discourse reveal their true nature which becomes clear from the semantic analysis of the lexemes which form these names. Sir *Fopling's* name, who is the main character in «*The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter*» by George Etherege, is formed from the English lexeme 'fop' meaning «a man who is very interested in his clothes and appearance – used to show disapproval», which exactly characterizes the true nature of the man (here and further definitions are retrieved from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). *Mrs. Love it* is a lover of the main character in «*The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter*» by George Etherege, whose surname is formed through the combination of the two lexemes (love + it); love denotes a strong feeling of affection for someone, combined with sexual attraction (ibid.) which also represents a good example of the strategy under consideration. *Handy* – is the name of a valet. Handy (ibid.) – means near and easy to reach. In my view – a perfect name for a servant. Another character – *Lady Fidget* («*The Country Wife*» by W. Wycherley) – has a surname derived from the lexeme 'fidget' which means to keep moving your hands or feet, especially because you are bored or nervous (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). Indeed, Mrs. Fidget produces a lot of flutter in the play. *Mrs. Pinch wife's* (ibid.) surname is formed by the lexeme to pinch – *informal* to steal something, especially something small or not very valuable (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). Indeed, in the play Mrs. Pinch wife is «*stolen*» from her husband by her lover.

Conclusions

The above cited examples of strategies show how deeply rooted the philosophy of libertinism was in the minds and discourse of the English nobility of the late seventeenth century, which is manifested in the discourse strategies of identification and naming, which in their turn are verbalized through the use of metaphor, personification and hyperbole and antonomasia correspondingly. In view of the obtained results there are the perspectives of future research work in studying more discourse strategies in the English drama of the late seventeenth century.

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